

# Crowley, Wolfe, Bruno

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 30 Jun 2003

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4056>

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Craig Brewer — 30 Jun 2003, 05:28

I just finished Little, Big, and first I owe a debt of thanks to this group for finally getting me around to Crowley. I've also been reading about Giordano Bruno. The two books together (one of the characters makes fluent use of Bruno's "art of memory" in LB) made me wonder 1) if Wolfe has ever spoken about Bruno or Renaissance Neoplatonism in particular (apart from the Kabbalah which, coming as I am from Frances Yates on this, isn't too far away from Bruno/Ficino/Pico and co.) and 2) if there's something "art of memory" like going on in the New Sun. Particularly, I was thinking about why Severian is writing his story given his powers of memory. According to Bruno's practices, memorization and repeated review can lead to new insights about the things memorized since the "subconscious" or, as he would probably prefer, concordances and correspondences inherent in the things considered are able to bypass rational thought to produce changes in the symbols of the objects memorized.

So. Does Severian appear to gain any kind of "mystical" knowledge of his situation by writing it out and allowing his memory to play with it? I'm looking through Urth of the New Sun right now to see if I can find any good passages, but I'm so far unsuccessful. Part of me wants to think that Malrubius and Triskele's reappearance as eidolons may have some kind of connection to this: they are (I believe) Severian's creations which can assist him, but they are not under his control. Does the act of narrating his story to himself serve some kind of similar purpose?

That's a messy question, but it struck me in Little, Big how Crowley was able to use the idea of the Tale in which the characters live as a process towards "transcendence." There are so many places in the book where the characters both act out their lives and "read" them or "organize" them for themselves at the same time (in the pack of cards, the house itself, the orrery that works only when it accurately reflects the

heavens). Something about gathering all the pieces of a story together in one place so that the story itself can end and become something different is an intriguing idea.

Craig

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Don Palumbo — 30 Jun 2003, 16:25 · follows Craig Brewer

Craig,

I'm rereading THE BOOK OF THE NEW SUN now, and there are places in which Severian does learn something useful he had not noticed before in going over his memories. For example--because this is in the chapters from CLAW OF THE CONCILIATOR that I read just yesterday, but not the best possible example--when he is searching for Terminus Est after escaping from the antechamber in the House Absolute, he eventually thinks again about when and how he was captured in walking away from the place where the sword is, attributes this to the subconscious awareness that one has made a mistake even when the conscious mind doesn't know that, and realizes in reexamining his memories that the sword may well be where he finds it, behind the broken door to the mirror-image storeroom on the other side of the stairs from the storeroom he had first searched.

I believe there are numerous instances like this; I'll keep an eye out for more while I read. I think he often figures things out by going back into his memory for data he can add to newly discovered information to reach a conclusion.

--Don

At 10:28 PM 6/29/03 -0700, Craig Brewer wrote:  
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Craig

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Andy Robertson — 30 Jun 2003, 13:35 · follows Don Palumbo

In my opinion, Severian DOES build a "house of memory" - it is The Book Of The New Sun.

And of course, the various actors in that House affect each other and mutate, as they did in NeoPlatonic magic.

You might go further and say that the multi-time-tracked world is the Increate's own House Of Memory. I am sure Wolfe would

----- Original Message -----

From: "Don Palumbo" <enpalumb at earthlink.net>  
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